THE MUSE IN EXILE

BY

WILLIAM WATSON

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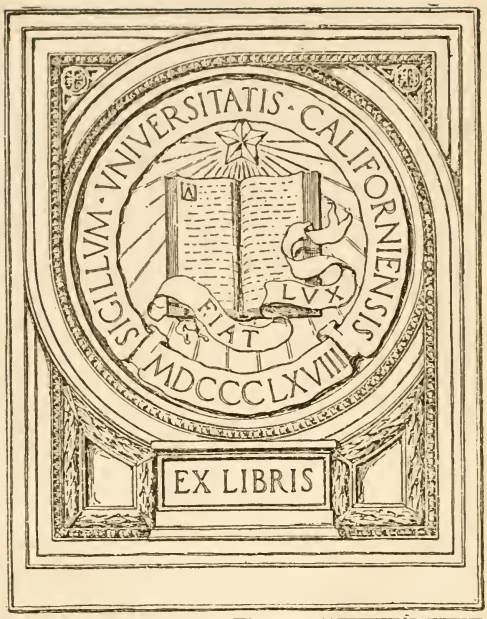
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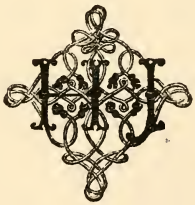
THE MUSE IN EXILE

POEMS BY
WILLIAM
WATSON

TO WHICH IS ADDED AN ADDRESS ON
THE POET'S PLACE IN
THE SCHEME OF LIFE



HERBERT JENKINS LIMITED
ARUNDEL PLACE HAYMARKET
LONDON S.W. ❀ ❀ MCMXIII

WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD., PRINTERS, PLYMOUTH

TO

ROBERT UNDERWOOD JOHNSON

OF NEW YORK

In your swift city, where all things
Hasten on such impetuous wings,
Nought have I known to fly more fast
Than hours that 'neath your roof were passed.
To you these pages! and may they
Hurry not utterly away.

W. W.

449120

PREFACE

THE greater number of the poems and verses in this volume now make their first appearance; others are recovered from the pages of the *Times*, the *Daily News*, the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Nation*, the *Spectator*, the *New York Times*, the *Irish Times*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, and the *Quest;* and I am indebted to the editors of these journals and periodicals for liberty to reprint my contributions. The "Hymn for a Progressive People" has appeared, without that title, in the new hymnals of the Unitarian and Congregational churches in America, but has not hitherto been published in England.

Concerning one short poem—the lines entitled "Science and Nature"—I wish here to say a few words. On its appearance in a newspaper this little piece evoked rejoinders, couched in vivacious verse, from two writers perhaps more truly distinguished by their prose—Mr. Eden Phillpotts and Mr. Chiozza Money. Neither of these gentle-

men resorted to any unfairer weapon than the retort courteous, but both of them seemed to suppose that the object of their very urbane attack was a person either uninterested in science, or hostile to it; and I had fondly imagined that there was quite enough in the fourteen or fifteen volumes, with which I have helped to encumber the shelves of the British Museum and the Bodleian, to make such a supposition impossible. It so happens that I was almost cradled in ideas of Evolution, and grew up in an atmosphere where "natural selection" and "the survival of the fittest" were household words. My earliest companion in country walks—my father—was a man whose very enfranchised mind had a natural impulse towards scientific speculation on its largest lines, and he did not long leave me unimbued with his own tendencies. One of the last letters written by Darwin—a letter making beautifully courteous acknowledgment of the utility of a trifling suggestion sent to him—was written to me, then a very young man, the author of a single unnoticed book. It was written on April 18, 1882, the day before he died, and was published by me soon afterwards in the *Academy*, where it can be found by the curious. I have been told on good authority that

the friendly interest which Herbert Spencer is known to have taken in my writings was partly due to his perceiving with pleasure that their author was in touch with the modern spirit, which to him meant the scientific spirit. Passing from these personal reminiscences I return to what occasioned them—the lines entitled "Science and Nature." These verses of mine had especial reference to "aviation," and I still think, as I thought when I wrote them, that to do imperfectly and with difficulty what any seabird can do with divinely beautiful ease, and then to call this awkward imitation the "conquest of the air," is to court criticism and to use vainglorious language. As a matter of fact, whilst I watch all the really great achievements of the scientific intelligence with as fascinated a gaze as in early youth, I cannot but think that there is as good reason now as there was then for some protest against what used to be called, not entirely without justification, the arrogance of science. When one considers, for instance, that the operations of electrical energy have been, as one may say, flashed and brandished before Man's eyes ever since he was Man, the fact that he has very recently come to know anything about them should rather be an occasion for

humility than for pride. When one remembers at how late a period in the history of knowledge was discovered either the circulation of our own dwelling-place around the sun, or the circulation of the blood in our own bodies; when, looking at the progress of applied science, we consider how long Nature had been vainly thrusting upon our attention the unused capabilities of steam as a motive power; one may, perhaps, be pardoned for asking of the scientific intellect some moderation in the homage it pays to its own subtlety. A hundred other instances might be cited to the same effect, but perhaps the point hardly needs to be laboured.

Together with the verse-contents of this volume I have included a lecture given last winter before various audiences in America. Prepared with enforced haste, on shipboard, it has defects of which I am extremely sensible, and no doubt it has many others besides; but when I sat down to revise and generally castigate it into some sort of fitness for its present form of publication I found that it would speedily become, under that process, a palimpsest in which the old matter would tend to disappear altogether under the new; so I decided to let it go forth untouched, with all its blemishes, more especially as it does say with

sincerity, if also with the disjointedness which is perhaps permissible in an oral address, some things of which I wished to deliver my mind. Certain very good-natured critics in America interpreted part of it as a lament for the insufficient praise bestowed upon living poets, and took me gently to task on that score ; but what I had rather meant to convey was a feeling of dissatisfaction at the paucity of real discussion, whether it involve praise or blame : direct discussion of concrete qualities in a poet's work. Twenty or thirty years ago we were threatened with a surfeit of a kind of criticism which made rather exaggerated claims to be synthetic, and which took the form of ponderous essays with some such titles as " Keats and the French Revolution," or " Shelley and the Precession of the Equinoxes." This kind of criticism has latterly abated, and though I do not much bewail the fact I could wish that the so-called " synthesis " had been replaced by rather more of definite analysis than I can see in the criticism of the present day. For a quarter of a century before the death of Swinburne it became the custom to place that poet on an elevation where critical tests and standards were simply suspended altogether. It is these tests and standards that I wish to see

more rigorously enforced, and applied to the living and the dead alike. I ask for more discussion of the actual ways and means by which a poet compasses, or fails to compass, his specifically poetic ends; more examination of his art and science as a poet.

To illustrate what appears to me the regrettable dearth of such discussion and examination, I will risk being thought a prattling egotist, and will tell a little story drawn from my own experience. A few years ago I resolved to deepen somewhat my too superficial knowledge of old English history by going to the original sources from which our modern historians derive their material. Accordingly, I spent no inconsiderable time in reading very thoroughly the old chroniclers of this island's fortunes, from Gildas and Bede and Nennius down to Florence of Worcester and other twelfth-century annalists, and I was greatly struck by the unexpected frequency with which superbly picturesque phrases leap from their rust-eaten pens. Where, I asked myself, in Freeman or Green, could one meet with diction so vivid as in the passage where one of these ancients, describing the mustering of an army, speaks of *the rustle of their breastplates*? Where could one find a modern counterpart to the

phraseology of another old chronicler who pictures a military conqueror as *filling his wheel-tracks with blood?* I, therefore, tried an experiment. Writing a poem, which I afterwards published—first with the title of *The King Without Peer*, subsequently as *King Alfred*—I introduced into its opening lines a striking expression directly borrowed from a sentence of Asser's in which he speaks of Alfred's physical infirmities: *Erat itaque rex ille multis tribulationum clavis confossus.* And reproducing the latter part of this sentence almost literally as "pierced with many nails of pain"—a haunting phrase which perhaps the author of the Book of Job would not have disdained—I then, throughout the rest of my poem, imported bodily many other powerful phrases from the archaic poems quoted in the Saxon Chronicle; from that Chronicle itself; from William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon; from that glorious romanticist, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and from kindred sources; weaving these phrases into my verse with such poor skill as I could command. One of them was possibly the original of a more famous but not finer phrase of Milton's. And as these jewels were not of my own fashioning, I feel free to say that they were magnificent; but I suppose they were taken to be my

own, and, at any rate, they passed without a word of comment, so far as I know, save in one provincial newspaper. I narrate my little experiment and its result, because I think the matter gives some point to my complaint that criticism is falling into a habit of passing neglectfully over what I will call the literary aspects of literature—surely not its least interesting aspects. I have, however, touched here the outskirts of a large subject to which I hope to return before this young year grows old.

W. W.

THE POET'S PLACE IN THE SCHEME OF LIFE

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IN the latter part of the reign of Queen Victoria, at Ambleside, in the County of Westmorland, and the country of Wordsworth, a coach-driver was taking a party of excursionists through one of the most charming pieces of scenery in that heavenly neighbourhood. He was taking them along Loughrigg Drive, and on passing the house associated with that eminent historian, Dr. Arnold of Rugby, he pointed it out to his passengers with this illuminating remark: "That was the residence of the late Dr. Arnold—Dr. Matthew Arnold, the Queen's head physician." Now that coachman was, as I happen to know, a most excellent man, a man whom the contemporaries of Shakespeare would, I suppose, have called "excellent in the quality he professes." His manner of driving combined an appearance of recklessness

with an actually high degree of circumspection in a way which gave his passengers at once an exhilarating sense of adventure and a comforting assurance of security. But I must qualify this tribute to his genius for "the manage of horses" in general, by the admission that he had little familiarity with the special points of that rather restive steed, Pegasus. In other words, he was, I am afraid, typical of those innumerable persons, in whose scheme of life the poet cannot properly be said to have a place at all. I say those innumerable persons, and, as a matter of fact, in my own country they form a majority so overwhelming that the minority sinks into an almost negligible, almost invisible fraction of the people as a whole. In America, I have reason to think that the case is different. The number of persons in this country who take an interest in poets,—it may not always be an effusively benevolent interest,—is manifestly far larger in proportion to the entire population than in the country of Chaucer and Milton. But even here I suspect that an increasingly substantial body of persons are acquiescing in a scheme of life which excludes poetry altogether—a scheme of life in which the poet has no place at all. This is a state of things obviously unfortunate for the poet, and I for one

hold the opinion that it is not altogether good for his fellow-men. You are, of course, at liberty to form your own judgment as to the disinterestedness of this opinion, but you will hardly deny that the state of things I have spoken of is really a phenomenon of our times, and, as such, deserves attention and study. What is the true explanation of it ?

We live, one man will tell us, in a busy age, and the world has simply no time for poetry, no leisure for the muse. Another will assure us that poetry is bound to recede and dwindle before her great competitor and supplanter, science. The external and physical world is declared to be more marvellous than any inner world of the mind, and imagination must be relegated to a comparatively humble place as a vassal kingdom under the suzerainty of knowledge. To both of these contentions I vehemently demur.

In the first place I have a strong suspicion that what is called the speed and rush of modern life as compared with the supposed tranquillity and deliberateness of the past is largely an illusion, and at any rate the slowness and tedium of our age is clearly what most often oppresses the ordinary man. The motor-car and the aeroplane are typical of a

hundred ways by which he desperately seeks to escape from the monotony, the slowness, of a life empty of action and incident ; a life in which nothing occurs ; a life made so smooth and orderly by the operation of law and custom—a life so regulated and policed—that none of the primal passions have free play in it, that the elements of sudden danger and thrilling hazard are almost banished from it, and the exercise of some of the more heroic virtues almost precluded. One might have thought that a life so shorn of its more glowing colours, its more violent situations, would provide precisely the antecedent conditions necessary for the appreciation of an art whose function is to see the world through a kind of ecstasy ; to heighten and emphasize its lineaments, though without distorting them ; to see vividly, to paint nobly, and to feel romantically, whatever in this universe is to be seen and felt and painted. Yet the truth must be confessed that the art whose functions I venture thus to describe—the art of poetry—is, more than all others, the art which of late has appealed with constantly diminishing force to the audience which it addresses.

In the second place,—coming to the statement, so often made, that poetry is being ousted by science, let me say at once that between poetry

and science I can perceive no antagonism whatever. I do not believe it possible for any true poetic greatness to coexist with an attitude of hostility towards the advancement of knowledge. If I heard of a poet who, whether under theological or other influences, cut himself off from the great avenues of enlightenment,—who, for instance, allowed himself to live in ignorance of the results of modern biological research as they affect the supremely interesting question of man's origin on this planet,—I should say—"this is a poet insufficiently interested in man and in life"; and I do not believe that such a poet could have anything really pertinent to say to his generation. The poet who is really a poet, however deeply he may strike root in the past, emphatically lives and moves and has his being in the present. There is nothing of the mustiness of antiquity about him. And the necessity for him is never so great as in an age exceptionally fruitful of scientific discovery. For the more we know of the plan and workings of this cosmos, especially in its astronomical relations, the more does it wear the appearance of a scrupulously and soullessly accurate machine; the more does it seem a merely ingenious contrivance, a magnification, on an infinite scale, of a

design not inconceivably beyond the powers of some prodigious human engineer ; the more does it seem a piece of illimitable, fantastic clockwork, rather terrifying in its adamantine regularity ; and the greater becomes our need of that particular order of mind which never quite loses its consciousness of the soul behind the apparently mechanical springs ; which cares about the springs, mainly in so far as they seem to give evidence of a soul ; and which translates into rhythm and melody the iron routine of the universe.

Yet I am bound to admit that this need for the poet is felt by but few persons in our day. With one exception there is not a living English poet, the sales of whose poems would not have been thought contemptible by Scott and Byron. The exception is, of course, that apostle of British imperialism—that vehement and voluble glorifier of Britannic ideals, whom I dare say you will readily identify from my brief, and, I hope, not disparaging description of him. With that one brilliant and salient exception, England's living singers succeed in reaching only a pitifully small audience. The fault, many persons hold, is in the poets themselves. For my part, I will not say that I share that view. Neither will I say that I totally dissent from it.

But I will say this—the indifference of the reading public to contemporary poetry is, in my belief, largely due to the vagaries and perversities of a kind of critic who is not so much an expositor and interpreter of literature as a rather officious interloper between writers and readers. Lest, however, I should be misunderstood, and should be wrongly supposed to depreciate, not only the noble science of criticism itself, but that company of select minds by whom its best traditions are honourably upheld in our own day, let me hasten to explain my meaning with some approach to fullness.

We have amongst us the critic with a bee in his bonnet; the critic who finds that it pays him to have a bee in his bonnet, since brilliantly unsound criticism is often more readable than criticism which is unbrilliantly sound; the critic who makes little attempt to arrive at fundamental laws of taste and of art, but who has infinite confidence in his own crotchets, who gives a loose rein to his idiosyncrasy, or, shall I say, erects his idiosyncrasy into a standard or criterion; the critic who happens to have a temperamental preference for a certain kind or order of excellence, perhaps not the highest kind or order, and who judges everything that comes before him with sole reference to the degree in

which it satisfies that particular idiosyncratic test of his. Then there is the critic who sets an inordinate value on a certain kind of simplicity,—a simplicity often as self-conscious and deliberate as the most highly elaborated ornateness; in fact, a simplicity which is one of the most artificial products of extreme literary sophistication. This kind of critic is offended by any richness or splendour of attire in which the poet has—perhaps appropriately—clothed his thought. We have, too, the critic who at every opportunity, in or out of season, pits one great writer against another, instead of appreciating the individuality of both; who plays off Wordsworth against Shelley, or Shelley against Wordsworth, instead of recognizing that the poetry of Wordsworth is a food, while the poetry of Shelley is a stimulant—that food is a more essential and indispensable thing than stimulants, while nevertheless stimulants, though not things one can live upon, have at times their value, and, in short, that the poet who feeds and nourishes us, and the poet who fires and quickens us, are alike performing, each in his own way, a noble service. There is likewise the critic —and he has been very much to the fore of late—who frankly dislikes and resents sound and

solid workmanship; who thinks it one of the signs of genius to be careless of finish and scornful of technique; who fails to comprehend that real inspiration can work hand in hand with careful craftsmanship, not extinguished or hampered by it, but informing and ennobling what would otherwise be scarcely better than dull mechanic toil. And finally there is the critic who is eternally demanding that poetry should be progressive, and to whom progress means a kicking against tradition and a violent breach with the past. He does not recognize that there are limits beyond which the only possible progress is a descent into mere eccentricity and formlessness. Some critics when they speak of progress really mean decomposition. In art, as in nature, there is such a thing as ripeness, and we all know what is the stage that succeeds to it.

Now I maintain that the total effect produced upon the "reading public" by this orgy of critical individualism is a distracting and bewildering one, and that it makes seriously against the appreciation of what is good in contemporary poetry. People read, let us say, in their favourite newspaper, a highly laudatory review of some work really produced in response to a purely factitious demand

created by a literary "group," by a critical cabal, whose habit it is to set an exaggerated value on certain literary qualities. The "public" buy some copies of this work, find in it no refreshment for their soul, nothing but what is odd or quaint or deliberately singular and freakish, and they come to the conclusion that the latter-day poet is a being who dwells apart from life as to all its larger manifestations, a person uninterested in politics, in science, in sociology, in the progress of the human species; a dreamy, ineffectual, and generally neurotic creature, concerned chiefly with the manufacture of strange epitaphs and the analysis of his own equally strange and not very important emotions. Is it surprising if they imagine that contemporary poetry has nothing to give them which can in any way illustrate or clarify life—nothing which in any way says to them an intimate and helpful word?

For amid many doubtful and arguable matters, one thing is certain: the majority of cultivated men and women do not set any exaggerated value upon these subtle and singular odours and flavours in literary art which your professional critic is so sedulously in search of. Your professional critic is often like a medical specialist, who is more

keenly interested in a remarkable and abnormal *case* than in the wider aspects of pathology or therapeutics. The typical intelligent reader does not share this purely professional curiosity; he is not so tired of the great writers of the past as to resent any natural and inherited resemblance to them in their successors. Rather is he pleased to see the ancient ancestral lineaments reappear, and to think that the noble tradition in which he was nurtured is being nobly perpetuated.

Indeed I am more and more convinced that there exists a large though scattered body of cultivated, intelligent, serious, but silent lovers of fine literature, who are quite unswayed by ephemeral literary fashions, and quite indifferent to the critical catchwords which are so often made to do duty in place of the unchanging laws of taste and form. These unknown and silent lovers of fine literature are probably the real readers, and the real judges, by whose judgment in the long run the poet stands or falls. They are superior to the mere virtuosity of the professional connoisseur, for they are not blasé as he is, but have kept alive their original faculty of enjoying those writers who tread the great main road of the mind; who belong to the centre party of literature; who

do not loiter long in the by-paths or fix their abode in some blind alley of thought or style. This informal judiciary is our nearest living approach to that ultimate court of literary appeal which we call posterity; and I venture to prophesy that before our century is twenty years older these serious lovers of serious literature, for whom the poet has still his very real place in the scheme of life, will have largely augmented their numbers.

Nor would it surprise me if such an increase of their forces should coincide with some falling off in the relative numerical strength of the readers of prose fiction. The position of prose fiction is at present apparently so impregnable, its conquest of the public seems so complete, that most of us can hardly bring ourselves to conceive the possibility of the fall of the novel from its high estate. And yet the novel, as we nowadays understand it, is a form of literature so modern—I suppose it dates virtually from the author of *Clarissa Harlowe*—that it must surely have been called into existence by some phase of taste which is itself also modern, and which, born of an age, may pass with an age. For it is only in the hands of its very greatest masters that the novel can truly be called a form of art. In lesser hands it is not so much an art as a

game—the game of keeping up the ball of the narrative, of holding the reader's attention by alternately gratifying and piquing his curiosity, of resorting to innumerable shifts and transparent devices which are scarcely the methods of an art, in the great sense of that word. The endless conversations, usually unmemorable in themselves; the so-called realism; the often indiscriminate transcription of life, as if everything in life had an equal value; all this has about it something which scarcely seems to smack of permanency. Art is above all eclectic. It selects, it does not merely throw "life" at you in handfuls. It fixes its eye upon large essential features of things, it refuses to have its attention frittered away upon a thousand accidental details. Think of the great human stories in the Bible; masterpieces of narration; stories told with the consummate perfection of narrative art, with epic breadth and with what I will venture to call epic brevity; no long-spun dialogue between the titanic actors in the drama; no chronicle of the expression of their faces or the tone of their voices, nothing but the huge elemental facts and events put before you with a huge elemental simplicity. Take the story of Judith and Holofernes in the Apocrypha. There you have a

story on the grandest lines, superb in the sweep of its action, and told in about as many words as would suffice to fill a dozen pages of a modern novel. That is the kind of narrative art which reaches and stirs us after thousands of years ; not the kind of narrative art which preserves a faithful record of how the hero of the story coughed slightly at a moment of supreme crisis in his fate, or how the heroine at a similar juncture wore a sprig of primroses in a dress of some fluffy white material.

In short it is my opinion—an opinion, I am aware, which is shared by few persons at present, and probably by no novelist—that the novel, as nowadays understood, will pass away, or at all events will cease to dominate the situation—to upset the balance of power, as it now does, among the republics and principalities of literature. Fiction is really the arch-enemy of literature at the present time. The very word "literature" seems in most people's mouths to mean scarcely anything but novels and tales. Now we have had amongst us in England during the past quarter of a century some gifted novelists, but we have also had some very real poets—poets whose names and achievement would, in my opinion, add lustre to any age or nation. They occupy almost

no place in the public eye ; they receive almost no substantial rewards ; and they are everlastingly being told what feeble and degenerate successors they are to the poets who, being dead, are commonly called the Victorian Giants. Your novelist, as a rule, gets his due rewards in this life. Your poet, as a rule, does not. Now it is no part of my purpose to attempt any estimate of the work of my poetical contemporaries in England. All that I shall do is to offer them my most sincere condolences on the hard fate which condemned them to be born there at all in the latter part of the nineteenth century. If you wish your poets to blossom and fructify as Nature may have intended, you must give them some warmth and sunshine. If they grow up in an Arctic environment of perpetual frost, a killing frost, do not expect from them the abounding harvest which only a summer sun can fully ripen. Their appropriate place in the scheme of life is not in life's cold outer courts and shivering ante-chambers. Surely it is to the great banqueting-hall itself that the minstrel should be bidden.

The true function of the poet to-day is to keep fresh within us our often flagging sense of life's greatness and grandeur. Like that Helen to whom

Edgar Poe addressed in early youth some of his most exquisite verses,—her whose classic beauty "brought him home" "to the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome"—like her, the poet recalls us, "brings us home" to a glory we are but too prone to lose sight of, to a grandeur we continually forget. But woe be unto him if he himself forgets that the ancient and only way in which he can truly perform this function is by marrying his wisdom to a worthy music. We have had poets among us who forgot this lesson, and their inevitable nemesis is to be themselves forgotten. Neither his intellectual brilliancy and subtlety nor his prodigal wealth of fancy has saved Donne from the fate which overtakes all poets who lack the crowning grace of harmonious utterance. There are singers to-day who seem to cultivate a gratuitous ruggedness, forgetting that what may be effective as an exception becomes merely tedious when it constitutes the rule. I myself should imagine that if one of these gentlemen happened in a moment of absent-mindedness to write a perfectly regular and smooth-running line, he would spend, if necessary, days and nights in tormenting and lacerating it out of all shape and comeliness. When I find myself suffering from the effects of what some

persons consider ruggedly powerful diction, my remedy is to call to mind and inwardly repeat some passage from one of the great poets, where language and metre are employed with imperial mastery, and yet with a perfect obedience to law—nay, in a spirit that rejoices in law and embraces discipline with ardour. Fortunately English poetry is rich in such passages, for in our blank verse we possess a measure which without any violent distortion of the normal line can be almost infinitely varied in structure and cadence and modulation by the architectonic power of real metrical genius. Our greatest poets exemplify this abundantly—but then theirs is a kind of poetry which disdains all oddity, all quaintness, all violence ; a kind of poetry in which power is wedded to grace, in perfect nuptial bliss.

Ladies and gentlemen, the foregoing observations were jotted down during my rather uneven progress towards you across the Atlantic in the teeth of adverse winds which seemed to typify somewhat the fate of the modern bard. Since my arrival on these shores I have been told that here also the public interest in poetry is visibly on the wane. I have even been warned that I could scarcely choose

a more unpopular subject on which to discourse than that calling of which I myself am a humble practitioner. If that be so, then the adverse winds to which I allude indicate a meteorological condition affecting a wider geographical area than I had supposed. Now here in America, you are at any rate to be congratulated upon your comparative freedom from the particular kind of social influences which in the mother country are apt to affect unduly—to affect illegitimately—the mental tone of large masses of human beings. In England it is possible for a frivolous aristocracy, an idealess plutocracy, or a somewhat unintellectual court, in a considerable measure, to set the tone of the entire community. King Edward VII was a man with fine human qualities which we must all admire, but he was not furiously addicted to literature, and to extol him as a patron of literature would be the insincerest flattery. Perhaps you will say that patronage, with its tendency to impair the independence of the patronized, is the last thing to be desired in the real interests of Letters; and in theory this is true, but in practice it is perhaps disputable. Similarly one may admit that titles and honorific distinctions are poor things in themselves, while recognizing that in a country

like England they still retain some of the symbolic value of insignia, and may occasionally serve the useful purpose of investing certain achievements which are more real than spectacular with a dignity visible to the general eye. In England, not state action only, but the personality of the heads of the state and of the occupants of august positions can affect profoundly the whole mental atmosphere. King George and Queen Mary are setting an admirable example to their people in all things ethical; if they can set an equally admirable example in the direction of things intellectual, their record will be a truly illustrious one. But, as I was saying, you in America are to be felicitated on the fact that you are not at the mercy of those chance currents, those fortuitous influences, which are capable of playing so large a part in the life of my countrymen. If ever there was a nation that seemed to hold its destinies in its own hands and to be master of its own soul, that nation is the United States of America. If *you* let the intellectual life of your country decline, *you* cannot lay the blame on a king or an aristocracy. As you look back on the history of your country, does it not seem to you that America would have been distinctly a poorer place in the human sense if it had not been for her poets? It seems to me

that the air of America is the sweeter because Longfellow breathed it. It is a vivid and a vitalizing air ; a tonic air ; an air that vibrates with powerful impulses. It feels to me like an air which a poet might be glad to have been born in ; an air which a poet might be glad to sing in. But do not ask him to sing in a solitude. Do not ask him to sing before an audience which visibly melts away while he sings. Give him something of your hearts, and he will give you all his own heart in return. Give him a place—an honourable and honoured place—in your scheme of life.

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THE MUSE IN EXILE

THE MUSE IN EXILE

VERSE—a light handful—verse again I bring ;
Verse that perhaps had glowed with lustier hues
Amid more fostering air : for it was born
In the penurious sunshine of an Age
That does not stone her prophets, but, alas,
Turns, to their next of kin, the singers, oft
An ear of stone : in bare, bleak truth an Age
That banishes the poets, as he of old,
The great child of the soul of Socrates,
Out of his visionary commonwealth
Banished them ; for she drives them coldly forth
From where alone they yearn to live—her heart ;
Scourges them with the scourge of apathy,

From out her bosom's rich metropolis,
To a distant, desert province of her thoughts,
A region grey and pale : or, crueller still,
Gives them, at times, gusts of applause, and then
Remands them to new frosts of unconcern ;
Nay, to atone for some brief generous hour,
Holds back their dues, husbands the heartening word,
Until they dwell where praise cheers not the praised,
And scorn and honour are received in like
Silence, and laurel and poppy are as one.
Let me not slight her. Let me not do wrong
To her whose child I am : this giant Age,
Cumbered with her own hugeness as is the wont
Of giants. Yet too openly she herself
Hath slighted one of Time's great offspring : she
Hath slighted Song ; and Song will be revenged :

Song will survive her ; Song will follow her hearse,
And either weep or dance upon her grave.
For in Life's midmost chamber there still burns
Upon the ancient hearth the ancient fire,
Whence are all flamelike things, the unquenchable
Muse
Among them, who, though meanly lodged to-day,
In dreariest outlands of the world's regard,
Foresees the hour when Man shall once more feel
His need of her, and call the exile home.

DAWN ON THE HEADLAND

Dawn—and a magical stillness: on earth, quiescence profound;
On the waters a vast Content, as of hunger appeased and stayed;
In the heavens a silence that seems not mere privation of sound,
But a thing with form and body, a thing to be touched and weighed!

Yet I know that I dwell in the midst of the roar of the cosmic wheel,
In the hot collision of Forces, and clangour of boundless Strife,

Mid the sound of the speed of the worlds, the rushing
worlds, and the peal
Of the thunder of Life.

TO A PRIVILEGED THIEF

Blackbird, that in our garden, here and there
Nibbling an apple or pear,
Hast marred so many, and slaked thyself on none—
If thou wouldst come and eat thy fill of *one*
Instead of ruining twenty,
Were it not kindlier done ?
Thou still wouldst have thy share
Of this our plenty,
This ruddy issue of the earth and sun.

But ah, thou dost for thine exemplar take
The loveless rake,
The shallow libertine,

Who wanders among maidens, leaving each
Like a peck'd apple or a bitten peach,
For other palates spoiled ; nor dares to win
One heart in rich completeness,
And banquet all his days on its upyielded sweetness.

THE CENTENARY OF DICKENS

Lines read by the author at the Dickens Centenary celebration at the Carnegie Hall, New York.

WHEN Nature first designed,
In her all-procreant mind,
The man whom here to-night we are met to honour—
When first the idea of Dickens flashed upon her—
"Where, where," she said, "in all my populous Earth,
Shall this prodigious child be brought to birth?
Where shall he have his earliest wondering look
Into my magic book?
Shall he be born where life runs like a brook,
Far from the sound and shock of mighty deeds,
Among soft English meads?

Or shall he first my pictured volume scan
Where London lifts its hot and fevered brow,
For cooling Night to fan ?
Nay, nay," she said ; " I have a happier plan !
For where, at Portsmouth, on the embattled tides,
The ships of war step out with thundering prow,
And shake their stormy sides—
In yonder place of arms, whose gaunt sea wall
Flings to the clouds the far-heard bugle-call,
He shall be born amid the drums and guns,
He shall be born among my fighting sons,
Perhaps the greatest warrior of them all."

So there, where frown the forts and battle-gear,
And all the proud sea babbles Nelson's name,
Into the world this later hero came,
He, too, a man that knew all moods but fear,

He, too, a fighter! Yet not his the strife
That leaves dark scars on the fair face of life.
He did not fight to rend the world apart,
He fought to make it one in mind and heart,
Building a broad and noble bridge to span
The icy chasm that sunders man from man.
Wherever Wrong had fixed its bastions deep,
There did his fierce yet gay assault surprise
Some fortress girt with lucre or with lies;
There his light battery stormed some ponderous keep;
There charged he up the steep;
A knight on whom no palsying torpor fell,
Keen to the last to break a lance with Hell.
And still undimmed his conquering weapons shine;
On his bright sword no spot of rust appears;
And still, across the years,

His soul goes forth to battle, and in the face
Of whatsoe'er is false, or cruel, or base,
He hurls his gage, and leaps among the spears,
Being armed with pity and love, and scorn divine,
Immortal laughter, and immortal tears.

THE THREE GIVERS

England gave me sun and storm,
The food on which my spirit throve ;
America gave me hand-grasps warm,
And Ireland gave me her I love.

Heirs of unequal wealth they are,
These noble lands, these givers three ;
And it was the poorest one by far,
That gave the richest gift to me.

IMPERIAL MOTHER

Imperial Mother, from whose breasts
We drank as babes the pride whereby
We question ev'n thine own behests,
And judge thee with no timorous eye ;—

Oft slow to hear when thou dost call,
Oft vext with an unstable will,
When once a rival seeks thy fall
We are thy sons and daughters still !

The love that halts, the faith that veers,
Are then deep sunk as in the Sea :
The Sea where thou must brook no peers,
And halve with none thy sovereignty.

HOME TRUTHS

It is not the flight from the country,
It is not the rush to the town,
It is ignorance, ignorance, ignorance,
Will bring old England down.

Though vast our overlordship,
And ancient our renown,
If the unfed mind is everywhere
'Twill pull old England down.

Do German legions menace?
Do German Dreadnoughts frown?
It is rather the German schoolmaster
May smite old England down.

LIBERALISM

To Liberalism I owe, and pay,
Allegiance whole and hearty,—
The Liberalism which has to-day
No foe like the Liberal Party.

ON PYRRHO, A GREAT EDITOR

YES, Pyrrho was my hospitable friend,
Till, at the nineteenth century's stormy end,
Upon one thunderous theme, we failed to agree.
Thenceforward, " Oh, the difference to me ! "
Thenceforward, if I pined, I pined in vain
For Pyrrho's conversation or champagne.

And whose opinion, Pyrrho's or my own,
Was wisest ? Time may tell, and Time alone.
I do but know that mine has cost me dear,
While *his* brought in ten thousand pounds a year.

A GUESS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

When Man was yet so young upon the Earth
As to be just as lofty or as lowly
As other creatures, whether hoofed or taloned,
Feathered or scaled, that shared with him this orb;
It chanced upon a day that he peered down
From his hid perch, high in some forest tree,
And saw beneath him on the ground a beast
Of alien kind, his foe. Then did he spring,
With something 'twixt a chatter and a screech—
Knowing not other language—toward his victim;
And as from branch to branch he swung himself,
With long, thick, hirsute arms, down to the ground,

It so befell that the last branch of all
Broke off in his right hand. 'Twas his first weapon!
The father of all weapons wielded since!
Nay, more—from this, all instruments and tools,
Whether they be of war or peace, descend.
Thus, in that pregnant hour, that held within it
All after ages—thus, and then, and there,
Took he the first tremendous step of fate
In the long task of making earth, stone, iron,
His servants. Thus his great career began.

Such is my guess—which whoso will may scorn,
And whoso will may ponder—as to how
Dawned through the darkness this our human empire
Over the beast and bird, this human sway
Of the earth and air, this governance and power

Whereby we bind to our hot chariot wheels
The captive world, and shall not pause content
Until all nature bear the yoke of man,
As man himself beareth the yoke of God.

June 4, 1912.

A LITERARY DIALOGUE

[The speakers, X. X. and W. W.]

X. X.

A POET always in a fuss ;
A bustling poet, who thought to utter
All Life's meaning in a stutter,
And whose poetry is thus
One interminable splutter ;—
An intellectual acrobat,
Skilled in a sort of strenuous clowning—

W. W.

God bless us, why, you don't mean Browning ?

X. X.

He made us stand agape, but we
Were wearied in the end by that
Intolerable agility,
As of some vast, performing flea—

W. W.

Come, come, this is too much for me.

X. X.

As to his " optimism," it's just
The doctrine of the well-dined man
Who, o'er his port, takes God on trust,
Lauds, with sound lungs, the Cosmic Plan,
And finds all perfect beyond question,

Evil itself being good when seen
Through a supremely good digestion.

W. W.

But if it's Browning that you mean—

X. X.

Great poets bring their fruits full-grown ;
Only the fine results are shown
Of their great thinking : *he* displays
Each crude process to your gaze,
Or gives you processes alone ;
As if a builder's hand should raise
No tower, no stately, gracious thing,
Looking out on time and tide,

But a wilderness of scaffolding,

And——

W. W.

Well, go on.

X. X.

And nought beside !

SUMMER'S OVERTHROW

SUMMER is fallen, is conquered, her greatness ravished away.

We saw her broken with tempest on cliffs of the Irish shore ;

We saw her flee like the wraith of a monstrous rose before

The airy invisible hunters that hunted her night and day.

And once we believed them frustrate, believed them reft of their prey,

For she suddenly flashed anew into violent splendour, defied

The yelling pack of the storm, and turned, and held them at bay.

In superb despair she faced them, she towered like
June once more,—
Then, sinking, shook on the world her golden ruins,
and died.

DUBLIN BAY

On Dublin Bay, on Dublin Bay,
The ships come in, the ships go out,
The great gulls hover and wheel about,
The white sails gleam, and shimmer away ;
And over the heathery heights we stray,
To watch, through a haze of sultry drought,
The ships come in, the ships go out,
Yonder below us on Dublin Bay.

We have heard the clang of Life's mean fray,
Where joyless sounded the victor's shout,
And brief as the flash of a leaping trout
Was Pride that pranced in the summer ray ;

And little we think of the world to-day,
Whether it smile or whether it pout,
For the ships come in, and the ships go out,
And yonder below is Dublin Bay.

Grief may visit us,—who shall say ?
Time may spite us, and Fortune flout ;
Care, with her brood, a doleful rout,
Care may follow us all the way ;
But Love is ours, and Love will stay,
Love that knows not shadow of doubt,
While the ships come in, while the ships go out,
Yonder below us on Dublin Bay.

HYMN FOR A PROGRESSIVE PEOPLE

GREAT and fair is she, our Land,
High of heart and strong of hand ;
Dawn is on her forehead still,
In her veins youth's arrowy thrill.

Hers are riches, might and fame ;
All the earth resounds her name ;
In her roadsteads navies ride :
Hath she need of aught beside ?

Power Unseen, before whose eyes
Nations fall and nations rise,
Grant she climb not to her goal
All-forgetful of the Soul !

Firm in honour be she found,
Justice-armed and mercy-crowned,
Blest in labour, blest in ease,
Blest in noiseless charities.

Unenslaved by things that must
Yield full soon to moth and rust,
Let her hold a light on high
Men unborn may travel by.

Mightier still she then shall stand,
Moulded by Thy secret hand,
Power Eternal, at whose call
Nations rise and nations fall!

IRELAND ONCE MORE

Wild Erin of the still unconquered heart ;
Thou whom the woeful interloping seas
Have blindly riven apart
From her that nursed me on great craggy knees,
Her of whose dales and mountains I am sprung :
Once more I stray among
Fields that remember thy calamities,
And hills that muse on ancient weeping years ;
And I behold how beautiful thou art
In thine immortal tears.

Yes, thou art fair, and Sorrow on thy brow
Hath deeper charm than all the brood of Joy ;

But sad have been thy harpstrings long enow,
And ev'n the loveliness of grief can cloy.
Oh, come thou forth and put the Past away,
Oh, bid it get behind thee and begone,
And with thy conquered conqueror speed thou on
Unto the mightier day.
This is no time for sundering and divorce,
This is the hour for closer bonds of soul,
In one great march, by one far-mounting course,
To one majestic goal.
Old Hate is dying : let Ignorance, mother of Hate,
Follow her leperous daughter through Hell's gate ;
And when from both at last the breath is fled,
Then for their carrion corses let there be
A sea-deep grave, to hide them till the sea
Gives up its dead.

ON KILLINEY STRAND

THE sea before me
Is harassed and stormy :
The low sky o'er me
  Is haggard and wan.
With grey tides foaming,
And drear winds roaming,
And tired gulls homing,
  Great Night comes on.

PART OF MY STORY

We met when you were in the May of life,
And I had left its June behind me far.
Some barren victories,—much defeat and strife,—
Had marked my soul with many a hidden scar.

I was a man hurt deep with blows that men
Ne'er guessed at ; strangely weak—more strangely strong ;
Daring at times ; and uttering now and then,
Out of a turbid heart, a limpid song.

Fitful in effort,—fixed and clear in aim ;
Poor, but not envious of the wealth I lack ;
Ever half-scaling the hard hill of fame,
And ever by some evil fate flung back,—

Such did you find me, in that city grey
Where we were plighted, O my comrade true :
My wife, now dearer far than on the day
When this our love was new.

THE SAPPERS AND MINERS

In lands that still the heirs of Othman sway,
There lives a legend, wild as wildest note
Of birds that haunt the Arabian waste, where rolls
Tigris through Baghdad to the Persian Sea.
'Tis fabled that the mighty sorcerer,
King Solomon, when he died, was sitting aloft,
Like one that mused, on his great lion-throne ;
Sitting with head bent forward o'er his staff,
Whereon with both his hands he leaned. And tribes
And peoples moved before him, in their awe
Not venturing nigh ; and tawny fiercenesses,
Panther and pard, at timorous distance couched ;

While Figures vast, Forms indeterminate,
Demons and Genii, the Enchanter's thralls,
Cloudily rose, and darkly went and came.
But so majestic sat he lifeless there,
And counterfeited life so perfectly,
That change of hue or feature was by none
Seen, and none guessed him dead, and every knee
Rendered him wonted homage, until worms
Gnawing his staff, made fall that last support,
And with it fell the unpropped Death, divulged
In gorgeous raiment to the wondering world.

So may an Empire, from whose body and limbs
The spirit hath wholly fled, still seem to breathe
And feel, still keep its living posture, still
Cheat with similitude of glory and power
The gazing Earth, until the evil things

That burrow in secret, and by night destroy,
Unseat the grandiose Semblance, and man's heart
Hastes to forget the obeisances he made
To a jewelled corse, long ripe for sepulture.

A FULL CONFESSION

WHAT lands, where you and I have dwelt or strayed,
What lands, you ask me, Dearest, love I best,
After this Isle, with which my roots are woven
Beyond unravelling ? First, your motherland,
Your Erin, dear to me for her sweet self,
Dearer for one sweet daughter whom she bore :
A land of glowing, kindling countenances,
A land where, when the lips are oped in speech,
All the lit face speaks too : and, next to her,
America, the Supreme Misunderstood,
The oft aspersed, oft railed at and reviled
And slandered ; in whose cities, in whose streets
And avenues, we almost thought to find,

Adored and supplicated day and night,
A graven image throned against the heavens,
A sculptor's marble dream of Mammon, there
Hymned with *Te Deum* by ten million throats,
But found instead the nourished brain, athirst
For nobler things than lucre ; found the love
Of these fair things sown wide in fecund soil :
And found the way not steep, but easy and smooth,
To that best hostel for all travellers,
The Human Heart Divine. How can we think
Coldly of such a land, itself so warm
In its accost and greeting ? There we won
Friends whom to lose were to find life itself
Less winsome. There, too, did we taste awhile
Sorrow, not pleasure alone. And there we roamed
Wide as from Spain-remembering shores, that watch
The hues and moods of a chameleon sea

Beyond Miami's palms and orange-groves,
To where Niagara takes the infernal plunge,
And out of the grey rage of the abysm,
Out of the torment, everlastingly
Upbreathes what seems, when sunlight touches it,
The smoke of Hell, lost in the smile of God.

A LITTLE DITTY

Oh, England is a darling,
And Scotland is a dear,
And well I love their faces
At any time of year ;
But on a summer day
My heart went astray,
And I gave it all away
To bonny Ireland.

Oh, hardy is the thistle,
And comely is the rose,
But witching are the maids where
The shy shamrock grows ;

And I knew, upon the day
When I gave my heart away,
It would ever after stay
In bonny Ireland.

THE INDESTRUCTIBLES

The dullards of past generations, the undiscerning crew
That turned deaf ears unto Shelley, that turned blind eyes upon Keats,
Unchangeably reincarnate, invincibly born anew,
Still buzz in the press and the salon, still lord it in learning's seats.

Do you think they are ever conquered? Do you think they are ever slain?
They are secular, sempiternal; the Powers that cannot die.
When all things else have perished, Stupidity shall remain,
And sit secure on the ruins of every star of the sky.

PEACE

Lines in anticipation of the centenary of the conclusion of peace between England and the United States.

Behold a marvel great !
Two mighty peoples, in two hemispheres,
Throughout a hundred years,
Slaying not one another in murderous hate !
This is the miracle we shall celebrate
With pomps, and feasts, and state.

O Nations, count not peace itself an end,
But something which, achieved, we must transcend.
Be glad of war's surcease,
But give no rest unto the soul of Man
Till he has fared some stages further than
Mere Peace.

A RETORT

YEAR after year it grows more hard
For the Muse to capture the world's regard,
And the world asks lightly, What ails the bard?

But it never asks if some deep ill
Be making its Soul more hard to thrill—
Some malady *there*, past leech's skill.

CLONTARF

HERE, nigh a thousand years ago,
  King Brian fought the Dane,
On a day of ruin and overthrow,
  And at eve in his tent was slain.

And here, where thrones came crashing down
  On the wild, ensanguined shore,
In a drooping suburb of Dublin town
  To-day the tramcars roar.

And they jolt me back with a ruthless whirl,
  From ages of myth and mist,
To an Ireland ruled by a harmless earl
  And an innocent essayist.

"IRELAND'S EYE"

A DREAR, waste, island rock, by tempests worn,
Gnawed by the seas and naked to the sky,
It bears the name it hath for ages borne
Of "Ireland's Eye."

It looks far eastward o'er the desert foam;
Round it the whimpering, wild sea-voices cry.
The gulls and cormorants have their stormy home
On Ireland's Eye.

A strange and spectral head the gaunt crag rears,
And ghostly seem the wings that hover nigh.
Are these dim rains the phantoms of old tears
In Ireland's Eye?

The tide ebbs fast ; the wind droops low to-day,
Feeble as dying hate that hates to die.
Blow, living airs, and blow the mists away
From Ireland's Eye.

MOONSET AND SUNRISE

The forts of midnight fall at last ;
The ancient, baleful powers
Yield up, with countenances aghast,
Their dragon-guarded towers.
Henceforth, their might as dust being trod,
'Tis easier to believe in God.

Where were the great ones of the earth,
Kaiser and Czar and King ?
Small thanks to them, for this glad birth
Whereat the daystars sing !
The little lands, with hearts of flame,
Have put the mighty thrones to shame.

To-morrow, who shall dare deny
The heroes their reward,
And snatch from under Victory's eye
The harvest of the sword ?
Not we ourselves, a second time,
Could dye our hands with such a crime.

Idle the dream, that e'er the Turk
Can change into a Man !
Have we not seen his handiwork
Since first his reign began,—
Since first he fed his lust and rage
On ravished youth and slaughtered age ?

If, of his power, no lingering trace
Remained to insult the sky,

Were not this earth a better place
  Wherein to live and die ?
If he could vanish from the Day,
What but a stain were cleansed away ?

Three lustrums have in turmoil sped
  Since Greece, unfriended, hurled
Her javelin at the python's head,
  Before a languid world,
While the great Kings, in far-off tones,
Mumbled upon their frozen thrones.

She dared too much, or dared too soon,
  And broke in disarray,
Where, underneath his crescent moon,
  The coiled Corruption lay.

Heartened anew, the scaly thing
Returned unto his ravening.

But now his empire, more and more
In narrowing confines penned,
An old and putrefying sore,
Hath festered to its end ;
Nor far the hour, when he at last
Shall, like a foul disease, have passed.

Pity for others had he none ;
In storms of blood and fire
He slew the daughter with the son,
The mother with the sire ;
And oft, where Earth had felt his tread,
The quick were envious of the dead.

But since his fierceness and his strength,
His faded pomps august,
His courage and his guile, at length
Sink into night and dust,
For him, too, let Compassion plead,
Ev'n as for all of Adam's seed.

O lands by his dominion curst
Throughout five hundred years,—
You that could ne'er appease his thirst
With all your blood and tears,—
In this new day that breaks divine
He shall drink deep another wine.

The cup of lowliness shall slake
Lips that nought else might cool,

When hurricanes of terror shake
  The towers of Istamboul,
And blasts blown on that Golden Horn
Arouse the City of Dreadful Morn.

For now the hour of dreams is past ;
  The gibbering ghosts depart ;
And Man is unashamed at last
  To have a human heart.
And lo, the doors of dawn ajar,
And in the East again a Star !

Loveless and cold was Europe's sin,
  Loveless the path she chose,
And self-upbraidings deep within
  She strangled as they rose ;

But that dark trespass of our own
Forbids that *we* should cast a stone.

Enough, if hands that heretofore
  Laboured to bar His road,
Delay henceforward nevermore
  The charioteers of God,
Who halt and slumber, but anon,
With burning wheels, drive thundering on.

November 9, 1912.

SCIENCE AND NATURE

You babble of your " conquest of the air " ;
Of Nature's secrets one by one laid bare.
Her secrets ! They are evermore withheld :
'Tis only in her porches you have dwelled.
Could you once lift her veil as you desire,
You were burnt up as chaff before her fire.

When will you learn your place and rank in Mind ?
Art can create ; Science can only find.
You do but nibble at Truth : your vaunted lore
Is the half-scornful alms flung from her door.
Your lips her weak and watered wine have known ;
The unthinned vintage is for gods alone.

A CHANCE MEETING

I MET a poet,—peerless among those
Who make their lives and songs one perfect pose.
A wise man too ! For, take the pose away,
What else were left 'twould pose the gods to say.

TO A CERTAIN MINISTRY

Statesmen, arrayed in all the splendour
Of your long record of surrender,—
If one false god there yet may be
To whom you have not bowed the knee,
Oh, haste to yield him genuflexion!
Fill up the cup of your abjection.
In that brief hour ere hence ye fleet,
Make your ingloriousness complete,
Let it not just elude perfection.

THE RASH POET

A POET wrote a little book, and rashly called it a play,
And some were wroth with the little book, for they said, " It is *not* a play ;
A poem, a passable poem perhaps, but oh dear, *not* a play ;
Not anything like a play ! "

A lover gave his lady a pearl, and somehow called it a pebble,
But she never quarrelled with the pearl because it was *not* a pebble ;
She never cried, " A passable pearl, but oh dear, *not* a pebble ;
Not anything *like* a pebble ! "

ARTHUR AT TINTAGIL: A ROMAUNT

Sir Launcelot he was lithe and agile,
His armour fitted him wondrous well;
And he spake with Arthur at Tintagil,—
The place beside the new hotel.

"Thy knights," he said, "are stout and able;
I trow their swords are trusty steel;
But what they like at thy Round Table
Is a square meal."

And Queen Guinevere was fair and fragile,
And loved Sir Launcelot all too well;
And she tired of Arthur and Tintagil,
Long ere they built the new hotel.

Fled are the Shapes of rose-hued fiction :
Vanished are Vivien, Elaine, Etarre !
Gone to a world of archaic diction,
Where only impossible beings are.

Fled is the Queen, the fair and fragile,
Flown with the Knight she loved too well ;
But the sea still roars beneath Tintagil
And that hotel.

ULSTER'S REWARD

What is the wage the faithful earn ?
What is a recompense fair and meet ?
Trample their fealty under your feet ;
That is a fitting and just return.
Flout them, buffet them, over them ride.
Fling them aside.

Ulster is ours to mock and spurn,
Ours to spit upon, ours to deride ;
And let it be known and blazoned wide
That this is the wage the faithful earn.
Did she uphold us when others defied ?
Then fling her aside.

Oh, when has constancy firm and deep
Been proven so oft yet held so cheap?
She had only asked that none should sever,
None should divorce us, nothing divide;
She had only asked to be ours for ever,
And this was denied.
This was the prayer of the heart of Ulster,
To them that repulsed her
And flung her aside.

When in the world was such payment tendered
For service rendered?
Her faith had been tested, her love had been tried,
And all that she begged was with *us* to abide.
She proffered devotion in boundless store,
But that is a thing men prize no more,

And tossing it back in her face they cried—
"Let us open the door,
And fling her outside."

Where on the earth was the like of it done
In the gaze of the sun?
She had pleaded and prayed to be counted still
As one of our household through good and ill,
And with scorn they replied;
Jeered at her loyalty, trode on her pride;
Spurned her, repulsed her,—
Great-hearted Ulster;
Flung her aside.

SONNETS

TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT

I HEAR a mighty people asking now
Who next shall be their captain and their chief.
Amidst them towers a Man, as Teneriffe
Towers from the ocean, and that Man art thou—
Thou of the shaggy and the craggy brow.
The day of fate comes on ; the time is brief ;
Round the great ship is many a lurking reef ;
And wouldst thou drive once more that giant prow ?
Perhaps thou shalt and must ! But if the choice
Fall on another voyager, thou shalt still

Be what thou art, thy nation's living voice,
Wherewith she speaks in thunder. Nay, thou art
more ;
Thou art her fiery pulse, her conquering will ;
Thou art America, dauntless Theodore.

June 18, 1912.

TILL THAT HOUR

When captive Bonaparte behind him threw
The chains of Elba, and flashed on earth once more
In arms, against him marched a host that bore
The lily of France ; and baring to their view
His bosom he cried, "Shoot!"—but no man drew
Trigger, and by a lone lake's wondering shore
They knelt in awe and homage, to adore
Him they were sent to smite and bind anew.

Would that the hour, O England, were at hand,
When thou, before the nations, without fear,

Mightst in thy majesty unguarded stand,
While none for very shame should dare assail
Thy shieldless breast ! But till that hour draw near,
Thou mayst not once ungird thy cumbering mail.

TO AN AMERICAN POET

After reading his "Dirge on the Violation of the Panama Treaty." *

FRIEND, who in these sad numbers dost deplore
A faithless deed: because I love thy land,
That gave to me of late so hearty a hand,
In thronged Manhattan, or amid the roar
Of that loud city on Michigan's still shore,
Therefore do I rejoice that one pure band

* It has been pointed out to me that the American nation, as distinct from its Government, is overwhelmingly against the policy here commented upon, and that the friend to whom this sonnet is addressed had himself emphasized the fact. I accept the correction gladly; but the Government of a democratic country is very apt to stand for the country in the eyes of the outside world, and if I have improperly confused the two I submit that the confusion is one into which the foreigner, in the particular circumstances of the case, may pardonably fall. To him, at the present time (January, 1913), the policy referred to is a much more visible fact than the national repudiation of it.—W. W.

Keep not ignoble silence, but withstand
Ev'n Her, their mother, when she shuts the door
In Honour's face. So Chatham, whose free speech
Yet rings through Time—so Wordsworth, whose free song
Comes blowing from his mountains—dared to impeach
Their England, speaking out for Man. And long
May Earth breed men like these, who scorned to teach
That Power can shift the bounds of Right and Wrong.

TO AN ENGLISH LIBERAL

Who accused me of political apostasy.

When reek of massacre filled the eastern skies,
Who among singers sang for Man but me?
These lute-strings were a scourge to tyranny
When *you* turned listless from those anguished cries.
A hundred times, when all the worldly-wise
Kept comfortable silence, I spoke free.
And would you now begrudge me liberty
To use my own brain, see with my own eyes?
When *you* hung rearward, I was in the van,
Among the whizzing arrows; and to-day,

Because in one thing I reshape my creed,
You cry " Apostate ! "—Liberalism indeed !
Give me the Liberalism that guards for Man
His right to think his thought and say his say.

TO MISS CLARA B. SPENCE

OF NEW YORK

[A greeting from William Watson and Maureen, his wife.]

LADY, whose task or joy it is to guide
By fragrant pathways, toward noble goals
Of womanhood, so many vernal souls,
Clad in the glory of their morningtide ;—
Across that Sea, the Great Unsatisfied,
That took the cruellest of its cruel tolls
But yesterday, and now exulting rolls
Above the fallen turrets of Man's pride,
Receive our salutation, you that choose
The life laborious, crowned with fruitful deed ;

And us forgive, who oft so lightly heed
What hours inestimable we richly lose,
In this old garden and orchard, or some mead
Lulled by the drone of the meandering Ouse.

THE REAL REFORMER

Not he, the statesman, whatsoe'er his name,
Who would strip Life of all adventurousness,
Of all but arrow-proof and storm-proof dress,
Making it more and more ignobly tame,
Poorer in perils which they that overcame
Were braced and manned by,—making it less and less
The school of heroes armed for struggle and stress,—
Not he shall win hereafter radiant fame.
But when some dauntless teller of truth unsweet
Shall shake the slumberous People, with rude power,

To a vast New Birth of all the soul and mind,
Him, and none other, at the destined hour,
Him, quick or dead, the thunderous thanks shall greet,
Not of his country alone, but of his kind.

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